

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

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In the Matter of)
)
)

Promotion of Competitive Networks in Local)
Telecommunications Markets)
)

WT Docket No. 99-217

Wireless Communications Association International, Inc.)
Petition for Rulemaking to Amend Section 1.4000 of the)
Commission's Rules to Preempt Restrictions on Subscriber)
Premises Reception or Transmission Antennas Designed)
To Provide Fixed Wireless Services)
)

Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association)
Petition for Rule Making and Amendment of the)
Commission's Rules to Preempt State and Local)
Imposition of Discriminatory And/Or Excessive Taxes)
and Assessments)
)
)

Implementation of the Local Competition Provisions in)
the Telecommunications Act of 1996)
)

CC Docket No. 96-98

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Reply Comments of MCI WorldCom, Inc
NOTICE OF INQUIRY

MCI WorldCom, Inc., ("MCI WorldCom") takes this opportunity to reply to comments
submitted in the above-captioned docket.¹ Comments are clearly divided between carriers who

¹In the Matter of Promotion of Competitive Networks in Local Telecommunications
Markets Wireless Communications Association International, Inc. Petition for Rulemaking to
Amend Section 1.4000 of the Commission's Rules to Preempt Restrictions on Subscriber Premises
Reception or Transmission Antennas Designed To Provide Fixed Wireless Services; Cellular
Telecommunications Industry Association Petition for Rule Making and Amendment of the
Commission's Rules to Preempt State and Local Imposition of Discriminatory And/Or Excessive
Taxes, WT Docket No. 99-217; and Assessments Implementation of the Local Competition,

(continued...)

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maintain that municipalities are expanding both the scale and scope of their right-of-way management to the point that it threatens to become service regulation; and municipalities who maintain that the Commission is strictly precluded from preempting any municipal action that does not absolutely prohibit entry.²

Carriers spent considerable time documenting instances where municipalities have discriminated in favor of one (class) of carriers³ and have implemented burdensome conditions for entry or expansion that go beyond reasonable right-of-way management practices.⁴ Carriers propose a variety of remedies to redress these problems, including: preempting municipal practices that *prima facie* inhibit entry;⁵ allow carriers to opt into the rights-of-way conditions municipalities impose on ILECs; mediate, but not rule, on disputes between carriers and municipalities;⁶ adopt principles clarifying legitimate municipal right-of-way management

¹(...continued)

Provisions in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, CC Docket No. 96-98, *MDU Right-of-Way NOI*, Released July 7, 1999.

²The Comments of the City of Chicago are a notable exception to the municipal position.

³Notice of Inquiry Comments of: United States Telephone Association (USTA) at 2; Triton PCS Holdings (Triton) at 6; Teligent at 9; Sprint at 5; RCN at 8; National Cable Television Association (NCTA) at 13; Media One at 10; McLeod at 6; Association for Local Telecommunications Services (ALTS); at 11; MCI WorldCom at 2; AT&T at 23.

⁴NOI Comments of MCI WorldCom at 5; ALTS at 17,21; AT&T at 9-13; CTSI at 12; Teligent at 8; RCN at 10,11; NCTA at 6; McLeod at 6; SBC at 6.

⁵NOI Comments of: MCI WorldCom at 6

⁶NOI Comments of: ALTs at 9.

practice;⁷ and initiate a rulemaking to identify practices that would be nondiscriminatory.⁸

Municipalities do not dispute the possibility that their actions may be discriminatory, competitively non-neutral, or that the fees they charge for rights-of-way are unrelated to use. Rather, they first assert that Section 253(d) gives the Commission authority to preempt only actions found to be in violation of Section 253(a), not 253(b).⁹ Consequently, they conclude, if municipalities were to engage in non-competitively neutral, discriminatory rights-of-way policies, the Courts, not the Commission, would be the proper agency to address the problem. They further maintain that municipal right-of-way policies do not absolutely prohibit competitive entry and therefore do not violate Section 253(a).¹⁰

MCI WorldCom limits its reply comments to addressing this point because this point is the lynchpin of arguments offered by municipalities. The municipalities offer an overly narrow reading of Section 253(a). Municipalities point to the entry of competitive local exchange companies (CLECs) in a number of markets as evidence that rights-of-way policies do not absolutely and unconditionally blockade entry. Under the municipalities' view, so long as there is one CLEC in a market, no matter how tenuous their financial viability, no local action could be construed as prohibiting entry.

⁷NOI Comments of: ALTS at 8; AT&T at 3; Sprint at 7; CTSI at 14; NCTA at 5; Global Crossing at 10.

⁸NOI Comments of SBC at 14.

⁹NOI Comments of National Association of Counties, *et. al.*, at 33.

¹⁰*Id.*, at 5. The municipal position implicitly assumes that discrimination cannot be a barrier to entry.

However, Congress granted the Commission broad powers to preempt state or local right-of-way actions. Congress gave the Commission authority to preempt *any* local action that served to prohibit *any* entrant, (not just those willing to incur the discriminatory rental fees imposed by municipalities) from offering *any* service. Thus, the Commission is empowered to preempt municipal rights-of-way actions that discriminate, or are not competitively neutral, if those actions serve to prevent just one potential entrant from offering service, expanding into new services, or expanding existing services to new areas within the jurisdiction of the municipality. CLECs have provided the Commission with substantial evidence that discriminatory municipal actions have prevented them from these sorts of expansions.¹¹

Having established that the discriminatory actions are preemptable under Section 252(a) does not mean that the Commission has authority to engage in blanket preemption without consideration of specific claims and conditions. Section 252(d) requires the Commission to proceed on actual preemptions under 252(a) on a case-by-case basis. However, the Commission may identify which types of conditions fall outside the legitimate purview of municipal right-of-way management. Municipalities that engage in such activities would therefore have the burden of proving their actions do not effectively prohibit the offering or expansion of a telecommunications service, if a carrier were to file a complaint.

Carriers uniformly support the recommendation that the Commission adopt national policy guidelines that distinguish between permitted and preemptable right-of-way actions. MCI

¹¹See e.g., NOI Comments of: MCI WorldCom at 3; PCIA at 5; Metricom at 4; CTSI at 9; Global Crossing at 6; GST Telecom at 12; McLeod at 2-7; MediaOne at 4; Level 3 Communications at 4; ICG at 6; GCI at 3-6; Cablevision Lightpath and Nextlink at 7; ALTS at 21; AT&T at 9;

WorldCom supports the list of preemptable actions offered by AT&T¹², permitted actions suggested by Sprint,¹³ and the policy guidelines suggested by ALTS.¹⁴ By establishing, and then enforcing, national rights-of-way guidelines the Commission would reduce bargaining disputes and costs for both carriers and municipalities. The net result would be the filing of fewer preemption complaints, preserving the authority of legitimate local right-of-way management, and more rapid, more extensive, and more varied entry of telecommunications carriers at the local level.

Respectfully submitted,

Lawrence Fenster

Lawrence Fenster
Senior Economist

December 13, 1999

¹²AT&T NOI Comments at 10-14.

¹³Sprint NOI Comments at 8.

¹⁴ALTS NOI Comments at Summary.

STATEMENT OF VERIFICATION

I have read the foregoing and, to the best of my knowledge, information and belief, there is good ground to support it, and it is not interposed for delay. I verify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on December 13, 1999.

Lawrence Fenster

Lawrence Fenster
1801 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 887-2180

Certificate of Service

I, Barbara Nowlin, do hereby certify that copies of the foregoing Comments of MCI WorldCom, Inc. were sent via first class mail, postage paid, to the following on this 13th day of December, 1999.

Metricom, Inc.
Henry M. Rivera
Shook, Hardy & Bacon, LLP
600 14th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005-0004

Cathleen A. Massey
NEXTLINK Communications, Inc.
1730 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Suite 1000
Washington, D.C. 20036

Louise H. Renne
Office of the City Attorney
City Hall, Room 234
San Francisco, CA 94102

Terry Lewis, Esq., Coordinator
Cooperative Housing Coalition
1401 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20005

Robert N. Kittel
Department of the Army
United States Army Legal Services Agency
901 North Stuart Street
Arlington, VA 22203-1837

Mary McDermott
Personal Communications Industry
Association
500 Montgomery Street, Suite 700
Alexandria, VA 22314-1561

Cais, Inc.
Charles A. Rohe
Swidler Berlin Sheref Friedman, LLP
3000 K Street, N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20007

Matthew C. Ames
Miller & Van Eaton, P.L.L.C.
1155 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 1000
Washington, D.C. 20036-4306

Fixed Wireless Communications Coalition
1300 North 17th Street
11th Floor
Arlington, VA 22209

Michael R. Carper
Allied Riser Communications Corporation
1700 Pacific Avenue, Suite 400
Dallas, TX 75201

Level 3 Communications, LLC
Andrew D. Lipman
Swidler Berlin Shereff Friedman, LLP
3000 K Street, N.W., Suite 300
Washington, DC 20007

Apex Site Management, Inc.
James R. Hobson
Donelan Cleary Wood & Maser. P.C.
1100 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 750
Washington, D.C. 20005-3934

Leon M. Kestenbaum
Sprint Corporation
1850 M Street, N.W. Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20036

Glenn B. Manishin
Blumenfeld & Cohen
1625 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20036

Cincinnati Bell Telephone Company
Jack B. Harrison
Frost & Jacobs, LLP
201 East Fifth Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Cinergy Corporation
Paul A. Colbert
139 East Fourth Street
P.O. Box 960
Cincinnati, OH 45201

Ameritech
Gerald A. Friederichs
30 S. Wacker Drive
39th Floor
Chicago, IL 60606

Entergy Services, Inc.
J. Wayne Anderson
639 Loyola Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70113

Kansas City Power & Light Company
Michael A. Rump
1201 Walnut, P. O. Box 418679
Kansas City, MO 64141-9679

South Central Wireless, Inc.
Gregory W. Whiteaker
Bennet & Bennet, PLLC
1000 Vermont Avenue, 10th Fl.
Washington, D.C. 20005

Spectrapoint Wireless, LLC
Scott Marin
1125 E. Collins
Richardson, TX 75081

Avista Corporation
Robert E. Neate
Paine, Hamblen, Coffin, Brooke & Miller
LLP
717 West Sprague Avenue, Suite 1200
Spokane, WA 99201-3505

Texas Office of Public Utility Counsel
Alberto Levy
1701 N. Congress Avenue, Suite 9-180
Austin, TX 78701

Central Texas Communications, Inc.
Gregory W. Whiteaker
Bennet & Bennet, PLLC
1000 Vermont Avenue, 10th Fl.
Washington, D.C. 20005

The Competition Policy Institute
Harry L. Pliskin
Ireland, Stapleton, Pryor & Pascoe, P.C.
1675 Broadway, Suite 2600
Denver, CO 80202

Competitive Telecommunications
Association
Robert J. Aamoth
Kelley Drye & Warren LLP
1200 19th Street, N.W., Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dallas Wireless Broadband, L.P., dba Coserv
Broadband
Robert J. Miller
Gardere & Wynne, L.L.P.
3000 Thanksgiving Tower, 1601 Elm St.
Dallas, TX 75201-4761

Ensemble Communications, Inc.
Bill S. Simpson
6256 Greenwich Drive
Suite 400
San Diego, CA 92122

Wireless Communications Association
International, Inc.
Andrew Kreig
1140 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 810
Washington, D.C. 20036-4001

Adelphia Business Solutions
Dana Frix
Swidler Berlin Shereff Friedman, LLP
3000 K Street, N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20007

State of New York Department of Public
Service
Lawrence G. Malone
Three Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12223-1350

HighSpeed.Com, L.L.C.
Kristian E. Hedine
1520 Kelly Place, Suite 202
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Global Crossing LTD.
Martin L. Stern
Preston Gates Ellis & Rouvelas Meeds LLP
1735 New York Avenue, N.W.
Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20006

Cellular Telecommunications Industry
Association
Andrea D. Williams
1250 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20036

ICG Telecom Group, Inc.
Cindy Z. Schonhaut
161 Inverness Drive West
Englewood, CO 80112

Metromedia Fiber Network Svcs., Inc.
Karen Nations
One Meadowlands Plaza
East Rutherford, NJ 07073

General Communication, Inc.
Kathy L. Shobert
1500 K Street, N.W.
Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005

McLeodUSA
Richard S. Lipman
McLeodUSA Technology Park
6400 C Street SW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-3177

Minnesota Power, Inc.
Ingrid Kane-Johnson
30 West Superior Street
Duluth, MN 55802

Lincoln Springs Apartment Homes
Lincoln Springs Management
1170 South Chelton Road
Colorado Springs, CO 80910

Windsor at McAlpine Place
Marcie Williams
6800 Fisher's Farm Lane
Charlotte, NC 28277

Gryboski Rental Properties
Catherine D. Gryboski
P.O. Box 13535
Green Bay, WI 54307-3535

Toonen Rental Properties
Tricia Glodowski
830 Liebman Court
Green Bay, WI 54302

Drucker & Falk, LLC
John A. Munick, Jr.
9286 Warwick Boulevard
Newport News, VA 23607-1500

Jamestown Homes, Inc.
Robyn Bolle
1700 Hobson Road
Fort Wayne, IN 46805

Cornerstone Properties Inc.
Rodney C. Dimock
126 East 56th Street
New York, NY 10022

Manchester Village, Inc.
Robyn Bolle
4233 Holly Hill Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46241

Orchard Glen Cooperative, Inc.
Robyn Bolle
1001 Sugar Maple Circle
Bloomington, IN 47403

Tara Cooperative, Inc.
Robyn Bolle
346 East Essex Lane
Fort Wayne, IN 46825

Harbert Realty Services of Florida, Inc.
Betsy L. Owens
601 South Lake Destiny Road
Suite 180
Maitland, FL 32751

ESSEX Property Trust, Inc.
Keith R. Guericke
925 East Meadow Drive
Palo Alto, CA 94303

Central Management, Inc.
Victor E. Vacek, Jr.
5444 Westheimer
Suite 1925
Houston, TX 77056

Irem Institute of Real Estate Management
Edward J. McKeegan
World Trade Center
350 S. Figueroa Street, Suite 292
Los Angeles, CA 90071

Gross Builders
Gary L. Gross
14300 Ridge Road, Suite 100
North Royalton, OH 44133

Lincolnwood Cooperative, Inc.
Garrett W. Floyd
2101 Mark Lane
Kokomo, IN 46902

Mark III
Charles A. Pechette
7321 Shadeland Station
Suite 220
Indianapolis, IN 46256

CarrAmerica Realty Corporation
Richard W. Greninger
1850 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Polen Mortgage Realty, Co
Robert M. Blick
P.O. Box 103, G-8308 Office Park Drive
Grand Blanc, MI 48439-0103

Linda D. Horne
Horne Companies, Inc.
7301 Warfield Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20879**

Eugene J. Burger
Eugene Burger Management Corporation
481 Via Hidalgo
Greenbrae, CA 94904

Daniel J. Lipnick
Transworld Properties, Inc.
Bank One Centre
910 Travis Street, Suite 800
Houston, TX 77002

James L. Poehlman
T & C Management Service, Inc.
579 D'Onofrio Drive, Suite 10
Madison, WI 53719

Kevin P. Kelly
Leon N. Weiner & Associates, Inc.
One Fox Point Centre
4 Denny Road
Wilmington, DE 19809

Penny Nichols
Property Manager
Windsor at Quiet Waters
11 NW 45th Avenue
Deerfield Beach, FL 33442

Michele Dooling
Property Manager
Windsor At Shirlington Village
300 S. Randolph Street
Arlington, VA 22206

Michael D. LaRouque
Portfolio Director
CAMCO
1201 North Clark Street, Suite 400
Chicago, IL 60610

Carla Kennedy, President
CAMCO
1201 North Clark Street, Suite 400
Chicago, IL 60610

Roland L. Turpin
Executive Director
Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority
400 Wayne Avenue
Dayton, OH 45410

Debra L. Benoit
Regional Housing Manager
White Birch Apartments
9239 North 75th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53223

Richard J. Bighinatti
Property Manager
6507 Sugar Maple Drive
Richmond, VA 23225

Mike Smith
Thompson Thrift Development
1100 Spruce Street
Terre Haute, IN 47807

Virginia A. Panico
Executive Vice President
Key West Chamber of Commerce
402 Wall Street
Key West, FL 33040

Ralph Paul
Colony North
319 East Lea Boulevard
Wilmington, DE 19802

Nancy Campbell
Hillcrest Apartments
P.O. Box 43
Greendale, WI 53129

William D. Gohl, General Manager
Liberty Heights at Northgate
12105 Ambassador Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80921

Anna Swann
Regional Vice President
Lincoln Property Company
3150 Royal Drive, Suite 300
Alpharetta, GA 30022

Beverly Lanham
Manager, Berkshire Springs Apartments
5704 Spring Valley Road
Dallas, TX 75240

Susan Young
General Manager
Indigo on Forest Apartments
9669 Forest Lake
Dallas, TX 75243

Shiree Spencer
Manager, Gulf Side Apartments
5613 Coventry Park
Maltom City, TX 76117

Richard B. Smagala
General Manager
The Chateau Apartments Co.
Philadelphia Pike & Shipley Road
Wilmington, DE 19809

Ann Niehaus
Property Manager
Windsor at Union Station
8197 Meeting Street
West Chester, OH 45069

Jenny Donellon
Property Manager
Windsor at Britton Woods
5489 Crescent Ridge Drive
Dublin, OH 43016

Karen Chasteen
Dave Lewis
Weigand-Omega Management, Inc.
333 S. Broadway, Suite 105
Wichita, KS 67202

Kathy Pauly
Weigand-Omega Management, Inc.
333 S. Broadway, Suite 105
Wichita, KS 67202

Fred Lightner
Jefferson West Apartments
810 Wildwood Drive, R-2
Jefferson City, MO 65109

Jennifer Blackstone
Property Manager
Windsor Courts at Beverly
201 Broughton Drive
Beverly, MA 01915

Dawn Eastman
Property Manager
Windsor at Gaslight Square
6516 University
Peoria, IL 61614

Kristine M. Dingley
Property Manager
Windsor Ridge at Westborough
Windsor Ridge Drive
Westborough, MA 01581

Steven G. Rogers
President & Chief Executive Officer
Parkway Properties
One Jackson Place
188 East Capitol Street, Suite 1000
Jackson, MS 39201

John P. McCann, Chairman
John S. Schneider, Preident
United Dominion Realty Trust Inc.
10 South Sixth Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Shannon Schmitt
Manager, Huntington Brook Apartments
12516 Audelia Road
Dallas, TX 75243

Kathy Fletcher
Manager, Providence Apartments
11700 Audelia Road
Dallas, TX 75243

Joshua Glazov
Corporate Counsel
US RealTel, Inc.
100 South Wacker Drive, Suite 850
Chicago, IL 60606

Dennis L. Funkhouser
Regional Director
The Mid-America Management Corp.
1100 Eaton Center
1111 Superior Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44114

Steve T. Lamberti
Vice President
Archon Group
600 E. Las Colinas Blvd, Suite 1900
Irving, TX 75039

Laura Arnett
Property Manager
8406 East Harry
Wichita, KS 67207

Patrick M. Kelly, President
FDC Management, Inc.
2600 E. Nutwood Avenue
Penthouse Suite
Fullerton, CA 92831

Joan Hill
Property Manager
Windsor at Rockborough
202 N. Rock Road
Wichita, KS 67206

Pamela Adams
Manager, Hunter's Glen Apartments
6100 Independence Pkwy
Plano, TX 75023

Jerry Kellen
Acting Property Manager
Flagstone
2002 Flagstone
Madison, AL 35758

Haydon Stanley
Atlanta Apartment Association
Post Properties
One Riverside 1
4401 Northside Pkwy, Suite 800
Atlanta, GA 30327

John W. Connor
General Manager
C&G Investment Associates
1690 Bob-O-Link Bend
Columbus, OH 43229

Sonia J. Patano
Senior Property Manager
Windsor Village at Waltham
976 Lexington Street
Waltham, MA 02451

Susan Genovese
Property Manager
Windsor Heights at Marlborough
39-5 Briarwood Lane
Marlborough, MA 01752

Donna Williams
Manager, Huntington Lakes Apartments
7324 Stillman
Dallas, TX 75231

Carl Kidd
General Manager, Prescott Place Apartments
2701 Franklin Drive
Mesquite, TX 75150

Ronda Wenger
Property Manager
Windsor at Asbury Square
2000 Ashbury Square
Dunwoody, GA 30346

Brian Bergersen
Spectrum Properties LG
10448 Stone Canyon, Suite 105 North
Dallas, TX 75230

Kara Moran
Property Manager
Windsor Meadows at Marlborough
141A-8 Broad Meadow Road
Marlborough, MA 01752

Carleen Hilmes
Manager, Pleasant Woods Apartments
Pleasant Woods Apartment Homes
9236 Church Road
Dallas, TX 75231

Matt Scarborough
Property Manager
Windsor at Arbors
5250 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22304

Theodore M. Seldin
Chairman and CEO
Seldin Company
13057 West Center Road
Omaha, NE 68144

Patrick K. Orender
Property Manager
Windsor at Woodgate
5400 East 21st Street
Wichita, KS 67208

Denise Silva
Property Manager
Windsor at Brentwood
630 Smithfield Road
North Providence, RI 02904

Grace Salazar
Manager, Benchmark Apartments
3424 W. Country Club Drive
Irving, TX 75038

Brian Cox
Vice President
Maxim Property Management
350 Bridge Parkway
Redwood City, CA 94065

Richard E. Steiner
Vice President
Berkshire Industrial Corporation
2 Parklawn Drive
Bethel, CT 06801

George J. Kontogiannis
Chairman and CEO
The Kontogiannis Companies
400 South Fifth Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Anthony G. Franda
V.K. Development Corporation
19275 West Capitol Drive
Brookfield, WI 53045

Heather Mulcaby
Property Manager
The Village At McLean Gardens
3401 38th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016
Heidi Hulme
Property Manager
Windsor at Chateau Knoll
2900 Chateau Knoll
Bettendorf, IA 52722

Betina Severn
Property Manager
Windsor at Ashton Woods
8401 Oakton Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Patty Streeter
Acting Property Manager
Windsor at Park Terrace
500 South Park Road
Hollywood, FL 33021

Wayne A Garland, Jr.
President
Buckeye Real Estate
P.O. Box 8310
Columbus, OH 43201

Kent J. Kolanko
American Shelter Management Co, Inc.
4031 South Webster Street
Kokomo, IN 46902

Roberta Cerabone
Property Manager
Windsor at Stonington Farm
150 Commons Way
Doylestown, PA 18901

Jon Arnold
Given & Spindler Companies
1001 Plaza East Boulevard, Suite 303
Evansville, IN 47715

Carol Guttrowski
Todd R. Fred/Karen Grummer
Trust Property Management
12000 Ford Road, Suite 245
Dallas, TX 75234

Paul J. Walter
Executive Director
Housing Authority
Park View Manor
535 Third Avenue
Antigo, WI 54409

Connie Simmons
Property Manager
Windsor at Pine Ridge
7100 Ducketts Lane
Elkridge, MD 21075

Carter A. Howard
The Carter Company, Inc.
607 Due West Avenue, Suite 116
Madison, TN 37115

Ken Reed
Vice President
Washington Real Estate Investment Trust
6110 Executive Boulevard, Suite 800
Rockville, MD 20852

Tammie Vaughan
Windsor at Old Buckingham Station
1701 Buckingham Station Drive
Midlothian, VA 23113

Nancy Ahlswede
Executive Director
Apartment Association
4120 Atlantic Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90807

Carolyn Staubs
Property Manager
Windsor at Fieldstone
703 Clark Court
Leesburg, VA 20175

Angela Springer
Property Manager
Windsor at Kingsborough
2720 S. Seneca
Wichita, KS 67217

Allen House Apartments
3601 Allen Parkway
Houston, TX 77019

Carol T. Miller
Property Manager
Thompson Partners
746 Horton Road
Bonita, CA 91902

Donald E. Schafer, Jr.
Regional Property Manager
Apartment Investment Company
9200 Keystone Crossing, Suite 500
Indianapolis, IN 46240

Shari Rosen
Executive Director
Apartment Association
14550 Archwood Street
Van Nuys, CA 91405

Edward L. Davidson, Jr.
President
Mid-Atlantic Reality Co., Inc.
248-C Presidential Drive
Greenville, DE 19807

Douglas J. Groppenbacher
ReMAX Commercial Investment
7110 E. McDonald Drive, Suite A-1
Scottsdale, AZ 85253

Vernice Waddic
Owner/Management
Castlebrook Apartments
4944 S. Sherwood Forest Blvd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70816

Harold N. Cohn
Hudson River Management
322 Eighth Avenue, Suite 1402
New York, NY 10001

Eileen Bruskewitz
Pinckney Dayton Apartments
211 W. Gilman Street
Madison, WI 53703

D. Scott Litton
Janesville Housing Partners Limited
Partnership, Meridan Group Inc.

Brenda Brooks
Property Manager
P.O. Box 620800
Middleton, WI 53562

Parkview Mobile Home Court
1331 Bellevue Street
Green Bay, WI 54302

H. Benjamin Duckworth, Jr.
The Duckworth Company, Inc.
4800 I 55 North Frontage Road, #31B
Suite 200
Jackson, MS 39211

The Town and Country Management
Company
Cathy A. Milder
100 South Charles Street, Suite 1700
Baltimore, MD 21201

Gayle A. Smolinski, President
Village of Roselle
31 South Prospect Street
Roselle, IL 60172-2097

Lori DeLuca
Mayor
2121 Cross Timbers Road
Flower Mound, TX 75028

Rick Stephenson
General Manager
Total Service Development, LLC
P.O. Box 12206
Green Bay, WI 54307-2206

Edward J. McKeegan
President
Institute of Real Estate Management
World Trade Center
350 S. Figueroa St., Suite 292
Los Angeles, CA 90071

Richard E. Steiner
Vice President
Berkshire Industrial Corporation
2 Parklawn Drive
Bethel, CT 06801

Jason Simon
Property Manager
Windsor at Eastborough
7024 E. Kellogg
Wichita, KS 67207

Jack Tennyson
Vice President
Central Management, Inc.
5444 Westheimer, Suite 1925
Houston, TX 77056

Draper and Kramer, Inc.
Greg L. Martin
Vice President
33 West Monroe Street
Chicago, IL 60603-5401

Roy E. Hearrean
President
State Wide Investors, Inc.
4401 Atlantic Avenue
Suite 300
Long Beach, CA 90807-2246

Ed Yaker
President
Amalgamated Housing Corporation
98 Van Cortlandt Park South
Bronx, NY 10463

Mary Jo Schneider
Property Manager
Windor at Polo Run
100 Polo Run Drive
Yardley, PA 19067

Barbara A. Woodworth
Director
Sterling House
5050 Hawthorne Drive
West Des Moines, IA 50265

Allen L. Thurgood
Executive Director
Coordinating Council of Cooperatives
465 Grand Street
New York, NY 10002

Minor L. Best
General Manager
Shaker Square
2375 Shaker Lane
Labanon, IN 46052

Leland R. Speed
Chairman
EastGroup Properties
P.O. Box 22728
Jackson, MS 39225-2728

Floyd Lee
Resident Manager
Radwyn Garden Apartments
275 Bryn Mawr Avenue
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

Thomas L. Hefner
Chairman and CEO
Duke-Weeks Realty Corporation
8888 Keystone Crossing, Suite 1200
Indianapolis, IN 46240

Dawn Williams-Deare
Property Manager
Diamond Lakes Apartment Homes
2700 Ambassador Caffery Parkway
Lafayette, LA 70506

Pamela W. Monroe
Senior Vice President
Sizeler Real Estate Management Co., Inc.
900 Downtowner Blvd., Suite A
Mobile, AL 36609

John H. Sullivan
Deputy Executive Director
American Water Works Association
1401 New York Avenue, NW
Suite 640
Washington, D.C. 20005

Sharron A. Beck
Property Manager and Agent
411 CO., LTD.
411 West 7th Street
Suite 1015
Fort Worth, TX 76102

Carter M. Comaford
Green Store Partners LLC
P.O. Box 2936
Palo Verdes, CA 90274

Bruce Wechsler
President
Wexenthaller Realty Management, Inc.
3170 N. Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60657

Angela Robinson
Director of Marketing
Key Management
125 North Market
Suite 1510
Wichita, KS 67202

E. Scott Dupree
SVP/General Counsel
CONAM Real Estate Mgmt. & Investment
Svcs.
1764 San Diego Avenue
San Diego, CA 92110-1906

Lee Anne Powell
Property Manager
Windsor at Fairlane Meadow
4900 Heather Drive
Dearborn, MI 48126

Annelin B. Knight
Property Manager
Nottingham
228 Sanders Ferry Road
Hendersonville, TN 37075

The United States Telephone Association
Lawrence E. Sarjeant
1401 H Street, N.W.
Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20005

Independent Cable & Telecommunications
Association
Deborah C. Costlow
Arent Fox Kintner Plotkin & Kahn
1050 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

The Wireless Communications Association
International, Inc.
Andrew Kreig, President
1140 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 810
Washington, D.C. 20036-4001

BellSouth Corporation
M. Robert Sutherland
Suite 1700
1155 Peachtree Street, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30306-3610

Edison Electric Institute
Laurence Brown
701 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

United Telecom Council
Jeffrey L. Sheldon
1140 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 1140
Washington, D.C. 20036

AT&T Corporation
Mark C. Rosenblum
295 North Maple Avenue
Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

SBC Communications Inc.
Alfred G. Richter, Jr.
One Bell Plaza, Room 3024
Dallas, TX 75202

The Association for Local
Telecommunications Services
Philip L. Verveer
Willkie Farr & Gallagher
Suite 600
1155 21st Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Cellular Telecommunications Industry
Association
Andrea D. Williams
1250 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20036

RCN Corporation
william L. Fishman
Swidler Berlin Shereff Friedman, LLP
3000 K Street, N.W.
Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20007-5116

Bluestar Communications, Inc.
Andrew D. Lipman
Swidler Berlin Shereff Friedman, LLP
3000 K Street, N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20007

Teligent, Inc.
Philip L. Verveer
Willkie Farr & Gallagher
Three Lafayette Centre
1155 21st Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Florida Power & Light Company
Jean G. Howard
9250 West Flagler Street
Miami, FL 33174

Winstar Communications, Inc.
Philip L. Verveer
Willkie Farr & Gallagher
Three Lafayette Centre
1155 21st Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-3384

GTE
Andre J. Lachance
1850 M Street, N.W.
Suite 1200
Washington, D.C. 20036

Bell Atlantic
Lawrence W. Katz
1320 North Courthouse Road
8th Fl.
Arlington, VA 22201

c/o Riser Management Systems
200 Church Street
P.O. Box 1264
Burlington, VT 05401

Optel, Inc.
W. Kenneth Ferree
Goldberg, Godles, Wiener & Wright
1229 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

The Electric Utilities Coalition
Walter Steimel, Jr.
Hunton & Williams
1900 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

American Electric Power Service Corp.
Commonwealth Edison Company
Duke Energy Corp. & Southern Co.
Shirley S. Fujimoto
McDermott, Will & Emery
600 13th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005-3096

Dana Frix
Kathleen L. Greenan
Swidler Berlin Shereff Friedman, LLP
3000 K Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20007

Lara E. Howley, Issues Manager
Government & Public Affairs
Community Association Institute
1630 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Michael Steele
Sean Burns
Equity Office Properties Trust
Two North Riverside Plaza, Suite 2200
Chicago, IL 60606

Douglas M. Kleine
National Association of Housing
Cooperatives
1401 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Frederick E. Ellrod III
Marci L. Frischkorn
Traci Bone
Jayne Lee
Christine Ferrari
Office of the City Attorney
City Hall, Room 234
San Francisco, CA 94102

Anthony Mordosky, President
ACUTA, Inc.
152 West Zandale Drive, Suite 200
Lexington, KY 40503

Donald N. David
Fischbein Badillo Wagner Harding
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Barbara Nowlin

Barbara Nowlin